



Seattle Human Rights Commission

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February 12, 2013

Rep. Ruth Kagi, Chairwoman
Early Learning & Human Services Committee
Washington State House of Representatives
259A John L. O'Brien, P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Re: Support for HB 1651 (Youth Opportunities Act)

Dear Chairwoman Kagi:

I am writing as Chairman of the Seattle Human Rights Commission in strong support of HB 1651, which provides that juvenile offender records will remain confidential except when the juvenile has been convicted of certain serious violent offenses or when the a court decides to release those records after a proper hearing. The bill also provides that juvenile offender records may not be published, distributed or sold. The Seattle Human Rights Commission strongly believes that limiting access to such juvenile records will give rehabilitated youth offenders a better chance at reintegrating into society.

The Commission believes that this bill reaffirms the fundamental human right to dignity which “is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”. Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. International human rights principles require that, [t]he penitentiary system shall comprise treatment of prisoners the essential aim of which shall be their reformation and social rehabilitation. ” International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 3. Thus, by advancing rehabilitation, the Commission concludes that this bill advances the human right of dignity.

HB 1651 provides our youth with the human right of dignity by providing them with the opportunity for rehabilitation and thus the chance to succeed and become contributing members of our society

We strongly support the bill as drafted and urge the Committee and the House to pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Chris Stearns, Chairman

Cc: Andrea Negrete, Commissioner, Seattle Human Rights Commission
Marco Lowe, Director, Seattle Office of Intergovernmental Affairs